Department of Community Services

Business Plan
Fiscal Year 2006 - 2007

Building strong, healthy communities together

NOVA SCOTIA
Community Services

Table of Contents

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister 1

1.0 Mission/Mandate 2

2.0 Planning Context 3
- 2.1 Social Trends 3
- 2.2 Immediate Challenges and Opportunities 6
  - 2.2.1 Challenges: 6
  - 2.2.2 Opportunities: 8

3.0 Strategic Goals & Outcomes 10

4.0 Core Business Areas (CBA) 11
- 4.1 Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) 11
- 4.2 Housing 12
- 4.3 Family and Community Supports 12
- 4.4 Services for Persons with Disabilities 13
- 4.5 Corporate Support Services 14

5.0 Priorities 2006-2007 16
- 5.1 Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) 16
- 5.2 Housing 18
- 5.3 Family and Community Supports 18
- 5.4 Services for Persons with Disabilities 21
- 5.5 Corporate Initiatives 22

6.0 Human Resource Strategy 23

7.0 Budget Context 25

8.0 Performance Measures 26

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

On behalf of the Department of Community Services, we are pleased to present our business plan for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

This plan is about helping people in need and strengthening the social service system. We are setting out our priorities which will help Nova Scotians gain independence and find security.

During the upcoming year, we will be implementing our Child Welfare redesign project. The report was released in January of 2006 and focuses on improving home services for families, increasing foster care supports and strengthening placement options for children and youth in care. We are making good progress on all aspects of the project, and will be implementing the on-call/after hours services for child protection this spring.

The Services for Persons with Disabilities Program has been undergoing a complete review and redesign. In 2006-2007, several program improvements are planned for the continued renewal of residential supports for children and adults with disabilities.

Housing Services, in concert with the Nova Scotia Housing Development Corporation continues to focus on providing safe, appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing for those who need it most. Phase II of the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement will begin investing close to $19 million this year, bringing the total federal-provincial housing investment to $56 million by 2010.

A new child care plan will be unveiled, aimed at improving access to child care facilities, and strengthening Nova Scotia's child care sector for the future.

We look forward to continuing our work with the many stakeholders, partners and organizations who also help and support Nova Scotians in need.

Sincerely,

David Morse
Minister

Marian F. Tyson, Q.C.
Deputy Minister

1.0 Mission/Mandate

The primary responsibility of the Department of Community Services is to ensure the basic needs of individuals and families are met by protecting children and adults at risk, and by providing financial support to persons in need. Most of the department's expenditures are in the form of direct payments to clients in need of financial assistance or to service providers who provide residential, vocational, child care, housing, protection and other social services on behalf of the department. These services form a secure and predictable social safety net for Nova Scotians and help contribute to better futures for children and families, persons with disabilities, seniors, and communities.

Mission

The Department of Community Services is committed to a sustainable social support system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This will be achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

Legislative Mandate

Delivery of the department's programs and services is governed by legislative on:

Statutes	Regulations
Adoption Information Act contains criteria for the release of information relating to persons who are adopted, adoptive parents, birth parents and relatives.	Adoption Information
Children and Family Services Act promotes the health and stability of the family while working to assure the best interests of children at risk.	Children and Family Services
Day Care Act promotes access to quality day care services through the establishment of standards and licensing and monitoring activities.	Day Care
Employment Support and Income Assistance Act provides assistance for those in need and promotes and facilitates their independence and self-sufficiency.	Employment Support and Income Assistance
Housing Act improves and increases housing opportunities for individuals with housing needs.	Housing Regulations
Disabled Persons Commission Act advocates for the rights of disabled persons to make decisions regarding their own destiny and living circumstances through participation in the development of policies and programs.	
Homes for Special Care Act establishes standards for homes and facilities caring for persons with disabilities and ensures compliance with such standards.	
Senior Citizens' Financial Aid Act promotes the independence of senior citizens by providing financial aid.	

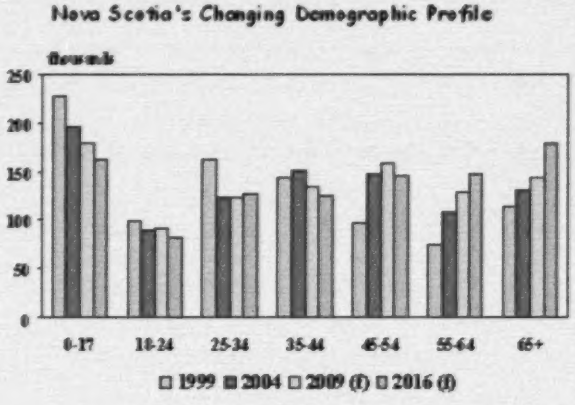
2.0 Planning Context

The social service system, the safety net for Nova Scotians in times of need, operates in a dynamic social and economic environment. There are many factors within our society and economy that influence the demand for social services. Many of these factors are beyond the control of the department, yet they affect the performance of the social service system. The most prominent trends and issues are discussed below.

2.1 Social Trends

Aging Population

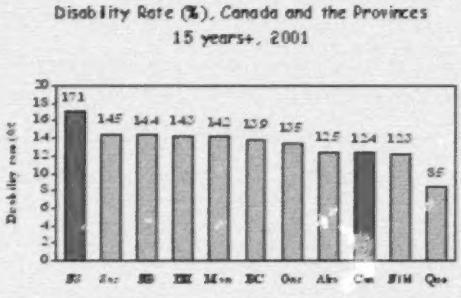
Nova Scotia's population is aging. Statistics Canada projections indicate this trend is going to continue for the next couple of decades. The median age in Nova Scotia in 2004 was 40 years, up from 33 in 1991. By 2016, projections indicate that over one third of Nova Scotians will be 55 or older[1]. An aging population will put increasing pressure on the social service system. Aging is often accompanied by changes in health, employment, income, and housing needs.



The aging phenomenon is made worse by the out migration of young people and smaller family sizes. Nova Scotia experienced a net loss of over 7,100 people between the ages of 18 to 24 years of age, during the ten year period 1992 and 2002[2].

High Incidence of Disability

A related challenge for the social service system is the province's high incidence of disability. Nova Scotians consistently report a higher incidence of disability than other Canadians[3]; 17.1% in Nova Scotia compared to the national average of 12.4%. Some of these disabilities require multiple supports in the form of income, vocational, and/or residential supports. Individuals supported through Services for Persons

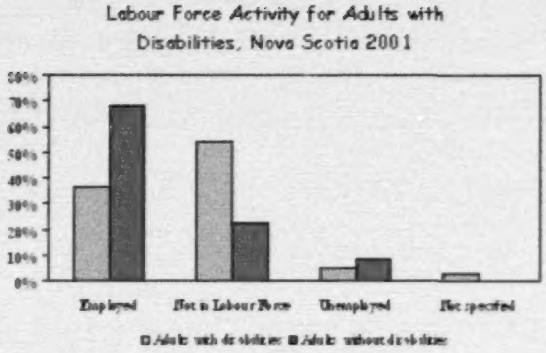


[1] Statistics Canada, *"Population Projections of Canada, Provinces and Territories 2000-2026"*, Catalogue Number 91-520-XPB

[2] Nova Scotia Department Finance, Statistics Canada, *"Annual Demographic Statistics"*, Catalogue # 91-213-XPB

[3] Cited in *"Persons with Disabilities in Nova Scotia: A Statistical Report 2004"*. Disabled Persons Commission. Based on Participation Activity Limitations (PALS) Survey, 2001.

with Disabilities currently require multiple interventions. As this segment of the population ages, the demand for existing and new services and supports will increase; and as the overall population ages, it is likely that the incidence of disability will also increase, putting additional pressures on the social service system.



Labour market participation for individuals with disabilities is much lower than other segments of the population. Many withdraw completely from the labour market. A review of the 2004-05 Income Assistance caseload shows that approximately 44% of all recipients reported some level of disability. According to Statistics Canada, people whose disability limits their ability to work are among the persistent low-income groups.

Young Adults with Low Levels of Education

The decision to leave school early can have a significant impact on future training and job opportunities, and may lead to long periods of income insecurity and dependence on government transfers. The current unemployment rate of youth between the ages of 20-24 who have not completed high school is 27.2%. A solid high school education is, in today's economy, the prerequisite to entry into the labour market, and the foundation upon which to build a future of financial security.

While most Nova Scotia youth complete high school, Nova Scotia has the second highest percentage in the country of youth, in this age group, who have not completed high school at 13.5%.[4] Without a high school education, this group stands a greater chance of entering and remaining dependent on income assistance programs than those with higher levels of education. Of the average monthly ESIA caseload in 2004-05, approximately 2,600 were young adults between the ages of 20 to 24 who had not completed high school.

Incidence of Low-Income

Like the rest of Atlantic Canada, incomes in Nova Scotia remain below the Canadian average. In 2003, the average household income in Nova Scotia was $54,322 compared to the Canadian average of $61,782.[5] While incomes remain below the Canadian average, most Nova Scotia families, almost 90%, have incomes well above the Low Income Cut Off (LICO).[6] The percentage of the population living below LICO has fallen from 11.4% in 1999 to 10.7% in 2003.

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[4]Canadian Policy Research Network Research Project - Young Adults with Low Levels of Education (YALLE): "*Without a Paddle: What to do about Canada's Young Drop-Outs*".

[5] Statistics Canada, Survey of Household Spending in 2002, Catalogue No. 62F0031; Spending Patterns in Canada, 2002, Catalogue no. 62-2020XIE, Table 1 and 2

[6]LICO's after tax data as determined by Statistics Canada

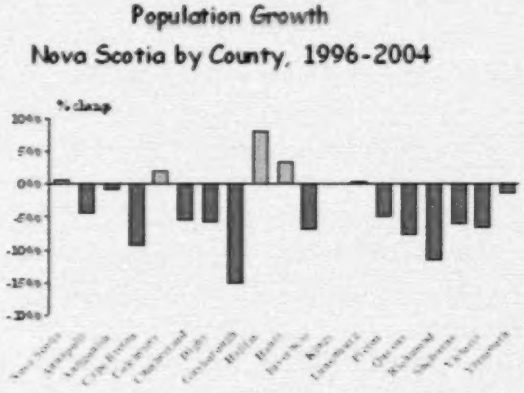
However, while the overall population is fairing better, the number of children in low-income households has remained in the range of 24,000 to 26,000 during the five year period 1999-2003. People living in low-income situations, especially families with children, often feel they have little discretion to make healthy lifestyle choices, participate in their communities or improve their economic and social status. When circumstances change, the social service system is often the only avenue of help available.

Persons Under 18 Years of Age in Low Income Households[7]		
Year	*Number of Children <18 in Low Income Households*	*% of Children <18 in Low Income Households*
1999	*24,000*	*11.8*
2000	*25,000*	*12.5*
2001	*26,000*	*13.3*
2002	*25,000*	*12.7*
2003	*26,000*	*13.9*

The department continues to pursue ways to assist people receiving income assistance to find and maintain employment that provides an opportunity to increase overall household income. It must be recognized, however, that household incomes are affected by many factors, many of which are beyond the mandate and control of Community Services, for example economic activity and wage rates, which require broader government input.

Rural/Urban Shift

Nova Scotia's population is on the move. Areas experiencing growth as a result of intra-provincial migration include Halifax, Hants, Colchester, Lunenburg, and Kings counties.[8] Other areas of the province are experiencing population declines, as people of all ages move closer to the more urban centers of the province.



This rural/urban shift continues to present multiple challenges for the social service system. In the Halifax metropolitan area, and other more urban centres, there is

[7] Statistics Canada, Income in Canada, 1980-2003, Cat. No. 13F0022XCB

[8] Cited in *Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia*, Statistics Canada.E-Stat(2002). 2001Census of Population http://estat.statcan.ca/cgi-win/CNSMCGI.EXE?ESTATFILE=Estat|English|E-Main.htm

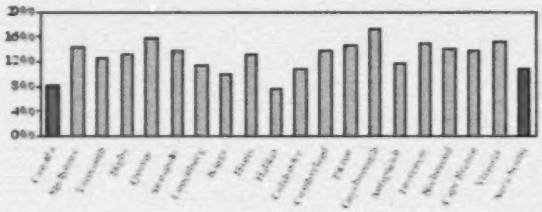
pressure to expand services. For example, applications for seniors public housing indicates that seniors have a desire to live in urban areas to be closer to public services, like hospitals.

At the same time, in other areas of the province there is pressure from both the community and service provider organizations to maintain existing service levels despite population declines.

Aging Housing Stock

Nova Scotia has one of the highest rates of home ownership in the country, almost 71% in 2001 compared with the national average of 63%, and some of the oldest housing stock. Almost 70% of homes in Nova Scotia are at least 40 years old, with some 22%, 60 years or older.[9]

Occupied Private Dwellings in Need of Major Repairs
Canada and Nova Scotia by County, 2001



Most Nova Scotia homeowners, 89%, live in homes without need of major repair. Given the age of the housing stock there are, based on 2001 data, some 11% of Nova Scotian homes in need of major repairs. This is higher than the Canadian average of 8.2%. Except for Halifax Regional Municipality, this is true for each county in the province,[10] putting additional pressure on home repair programs.

2.2 Immediate Challenges and Opportunities

In addition to these changing trends, the department is faced with a number of immediate challenges and opportunities.

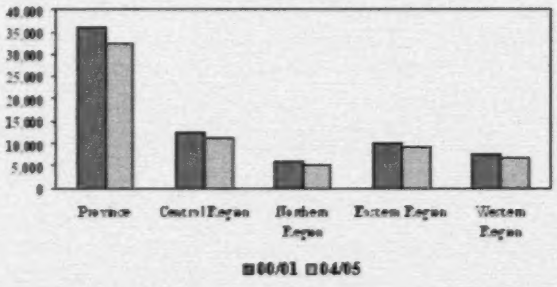
2.2.1 Challenges:

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) Caseload

The focus of Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) is to encourage and help individuals and families in their efforts to become self-reliant.

The trend over the course of the past five years has been positive, declining by 11% from an average annual caseload of 36,210 cases in

Average Monthly Income Assistance Caseload
Nova Scotia by Region, 00/01 and 04/05



[9]Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Canadian Housing Observer, 2004, Dwellings by Period of Construction, Nova Scotia 2001

[10]Major repairs – includes defective plumbing or defective wiring, structural repairs to walls, floors or ceiling etc. (Statistics Canada).

2000-2001 to 32,245 in 2004-2005.

Further reductions in caseload will become increasingly difficult to attain. A profile of the current ESIA caseload indicates that clients have multiple barriers to employment. The profile also indicates that many clients have not completed high school; are lacking marketable skills; have minimal work training or employment experience; and report some level of disability. Addressing these barriers requires long term interventions that include access to literacy, skills development and job search programs.

Increasing Complexity of Need

The needs of people accessing the department's programs are becoming increasingly complex. In the Child Welfare program for example, many children in care have special needs including behavioural, emotional, physical, mental or other challenges. Most require counseling and other forms of treatment to resolve. Many placement providers report that they require more timely access to clinical specialists to manage children's complex behaviours and training to manage acute behaviours.

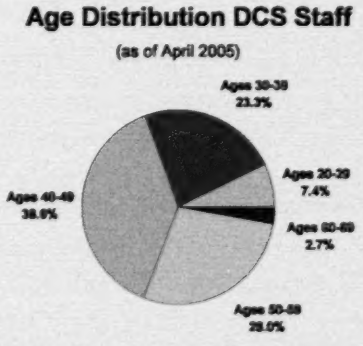
At the same time, the Services for Persons with Disabilities program is experiencing increasing requests from a small but significant portion of the disabled population with complex needs who require multiple services. The needs of this population pose a challenge to existing policy, legislation, and service systems.

Increasing Annual Operating Expenses - Housing

The annual operating expenses for the approximately 12,000 public housing rental units are increasing. Expenses are directly affected by the rising costs of utilities, home heating, and building materials and wages. Unlike the private rental market, where cost increases can be passed onto tenants, this is not always possible given the income circumstances of tenants in public housing.

Department's Aging Workforce

Community services, like many other departments of government, has an aging workforce. The chart to the right indicates that some two-thirds of employees of the department are over the age of 40; with 28% reaching retirement age over the course of the next five years.



Increasing emphasis is being placed on staff retention and recruitment strategies, career planning, training and development planning. Working with the Public Service Commission, a Succession Management Plan has been developed to address the challenge of sustaining a knowledgeable and competent work force.

2.2.2 Opportunities:

Chid Welfare Redesign

In January 2006, the report of the Minister's Joint Child Welfare Steering Committee, *Improving Services for Children and Families*, was released. The report provides a pathway for improving key areas of child welfare service delivery:

- child welfare placement system
- on-call/after hours services for child protection
- foster and adoption services
- opportunities for shared services between the province child welfare agencies.

The recommendations in this report will help strengthen services to ensure the department is providing stable, safe and nurturing environments for children who can not live with their birth families.

Early Childhood Development/Early Learning and Child Care

The funding that will be provided by the federal government for investments in early learning and child care in 2006-2007 will serve to compliment and expand services, that are currently provincially and federally funded. Federal investments prior to 2005-2006 include funding provided through the Early Childhood Development Communique of 2000 and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care of 2003.

The additional funding will enable: continued growth in licensed child care facilities and Family Home Day Care spaces; support the recruitment, retention and training of early childhood educators; further opportunities for developing inclusive early childhood environments for children with special needs; enhance the administrative capacity of early childhood programs; provide additional subsidy spaces; and implement improved accountability via service level agreements and improved business practices.

The infusion of the combined funding (provincial and federal) will be another step in solidifying the strong foundation and infrastructure required in the development of an early learning and child care system.

Services for Persons with Disabilities Renewal

The Services for Persons with Disabilities Program has been undergoing a complete review and redesign. The goal is to develop a modern, fair, equitable, responsive and sustainable support system that will enable persons with disabilities to have opportunities to participate as healthy, safe citizens in their communities. The renewal has resulted in the development of three new support programs for persons with disabilities: Direct Family Support, Independent Living and Alternative Family Support. In 2006-2007, several initiatives are planned for the continued renewal of residential supports for children and adults with disabilities.

Affordable Housing Program, Phase II
Nova Scotia and Canada have signed a new agreement for Phase II of the Affordable Housing Program. This new agreement is worth $18.92 million, bringing the total investment under the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Program to $56.18 million by 2010. Delivery of the Phase II funding will begin in 2006-2007, and will include funding for new rental projects and for sustaining existing home ownership and rental housing.

Affordable Federal Housing Trust
In May 2006, the Federal government introduced a new affordable housing trust for provinces targeted primarily to capital expenditures. Nova Scotia should receive approximately $23 million. This funding will enable Nova Scotia to upgrade and repair units that are at risk of falling out of the social housing portfolio.

Continuum of Care Working Group
In 2005, the departments of Community Services and Health established the Continuum of Care Working Group. The role of the working group is to develop, coordinate and monitor approved projects, within the context of the strategic directions and initiatives established through the joint meeting of the departments of Community Services and Health.

The two departments are committed to the provision of supports based on identified needs, across the continuum from children and youth to adults and seniors, and across a range of programs including health services, community and income supports, and housing and employment. Both departments must work together to assure Nova Scotians receive appropriate responses to identified needs, particularly when those needs are more complex.

The working group includes senior staff from both departments who identify opportunities for collaboration and guide specific joint initiatives. To date the working group has taken on a number of initiatives where better service to Nova Scotians can be achieved through staff of the two departments working together collaboratively.

Mi'Kmaw - Nova Scotia - Canada Tripartite Forum
The department supports government's commitment to the work of the Mi'kmaw - Nova Scotia - Canada Tripartite Forum, and will continue to actively take a lead role on the Social Working Committee. The Social Working Committee has and continues to be an effective mechanism for information sharing and knowledge exchange - key ingredients to the development of shared understanding and the creation of appropriate solutions. Considerable progress has been made on such projects as the Social Data Network and the pilot case management system. Community Services will continue to identify opportunities for coordination between federal, provincial and Aboriginal organizations in order to address the social needs of the Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia.

Setting Future Directions - National Child Benefit
The current National Child Benefit program, introduced in 2001, is nearing maturity in its current

design. The evaluation of the program has shown positive results for low-income families.[11] In its role as the lead province, Nova Scotia will be able to help shape the future direction of this national program, and inform the future development of its complementary program, the Nova Scotia Child Benefit.

3.0 Strategic Goals & Outcomes

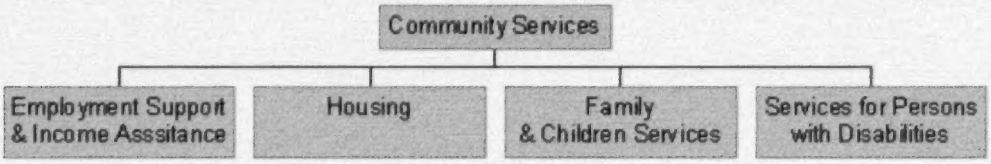
The strategic goals and outcomes of the department, to which all core business areas and corporate support services contribute are as follows:

Goals	Outcomes
▸ To strengthen the capacity of individuals and families to participate in their communities, achieve their full potential, and assume responsibility for addressing their own needs.	▸ Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.
▸ To build and maintain a well managed, capable, responsive and sustainable social service system.	▸ Strong, responsive, and sustainable social support system.
▸ To create an integrated, client focused, quality service delivery system.	▸ Integrated, quality service delivery.
▸ To strengthen service provider relationships and leverage opportunities for collaboration.	▸ Strong provider relationships and collaboration.
▸ To develop and demonstrate leadership in the continuous pursuit of excellence.	▸ Leadership and the continuous pursuit of excellence.
▸ To foster a competent and committed workforce through appreciation and support for individuals and teamwork.	▸ Skilled, flexible workforce.

[11] http://nationalchildbenefit.ca/ncb/library1.shtml

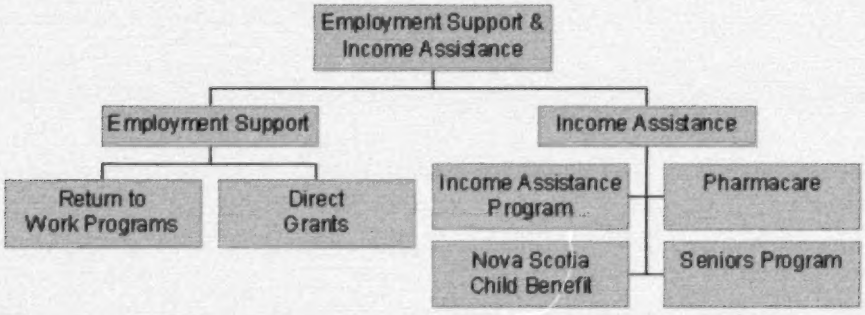
4.0 Core Business Areas (CBA)

The primary responsibility of Community Services is to ensure the basic needs of individuals and families are met by protecting children and adults at risk, and by providing financial support to persons in need. Most of the department's expenditures are in the form of direct payments to clients in need of financial assistance or to service providers who provide residential, vocational, and protection services on behalf of the department. The core businesses and related programs of the department are outlined below.



4.1 Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

The ESIA Program is the largest program of the Department of Community Services. During 2005-2006, the average monthly caseload was approximately 31,000. The focus of this core business area is to provide financial assistance and other supports for persons in need and to facilitate their movement towards employment, independence and self-sufficiency. The two ESIA program areas are outlined below.



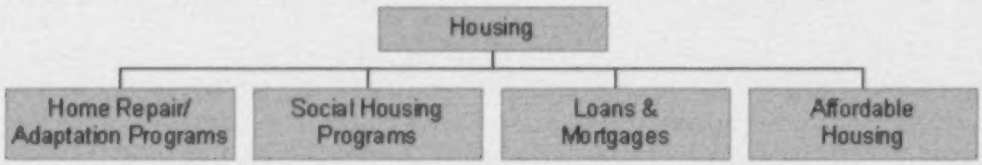
Services include:

- a range of employment support services, including financial assistance for special needs for child care and transportation for employment or training
- financial assistance to assist individuals and families to meet their basic needs such as food and shelter
- financial assistance for special needs related to employability and training, such as dental care and eye glasses
- prescription drug coverage for income assistance recipients and transitional coverage for recipients entering the labour market

- financial assistance programs to help seniors maintain their independence in their own homes
- employment assistance for persons with disabilities under the federal/provincial Labour Market Development Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMDA)
- child benefits provided through the Nova Scotia Child Benefit program (NSCB) for low income families who have children under 18 years of age.

4.2 Housing

The department provides safe, affordable housing to people across the province and uses its existing buildings, technical and financial resources to support community-based organizations and communities throughout Nova Scotia.



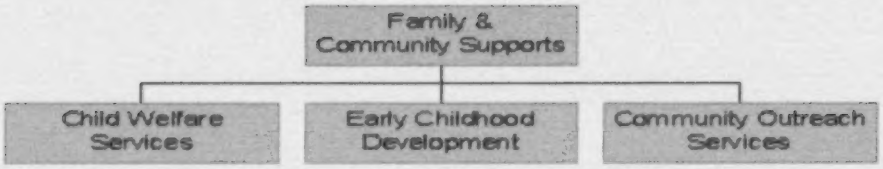
The range of housing services includes:

- housing assistance programs for low to moderate income Nova Scotians to help them make repairs/adaptations to their homes
- approximately 12,000 public housing units for approximately 18,500 Nova Scotians
- development and sustaining affordable home ownership and rental housing under the Affordable Housing Program
- administration of third party agreements for approximately 9,000 co-operative and other non-profit housing units
- administration of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's loan portfolio in Nova Scotia of approximately $180 million and $37 million in provincial loans to homeowners, and to non-profit organizations.

Housing also provides space in some public housing buildings for community groups to provide services to support tenants and their communities, including parent and family resource centres, child-care centres and breakfast programs for children.

4.3 Family and Community Supports

Safe and nurturing environments in which children can develop to their full potential are critical to the health and well-being of our children, and ultimately to the economic and social prosperity of the province. The Family and Community Supports Division provides a full range of supports for children and families.



The range of services includes:

- the provision of interventions, counseling and placement services for children and youth in need of protection (i.e., foster ca , adoptions and/or residential services)
- programs that support families and foster healthy child development including: child care subsidies, financial support to child care facilities, and funding for the inclusion children with special needs; initiatives that support and enhance early learning and child care investments
- early intervention services to help young children with special needs and their families
- support for a variety of community outreach services including transition houses for women who are victims of violence and their children, women's centers, and men's intervention programs
- coordination of community development initiatives focused on prevention of child abuse, better outcomes for children, and parent education and support.

4.4 Services for Persons with Disabilities

The Services for Persons with Disabilities Program provides services for children and adults with disabilities. The program serves people with an intellectual disability, a long-term mental illness, a physical disability, or some combination of the three. The goal is to provide a range of programs that support people at various stages of their development and independence. Services are purchased on behalf of eligible clients from a network of organizations across the province.

Services range from:

- information, assessment, and case management
- a range of community-based and facility-based residential options including Independent Living, Direct Family Support, Alternative Family Support, Small Options, Group Homes & Developmental Residences, Residential Care Facilities, Adult Residential and Regional Rehabilitation Centres
- a variety of vocational/day supports providing training and employment

opportunities in supportive environments, including workshops and adult service centres.

4.5 Corporate Support Services

Communications

The Communications Division assists the staff of the department in sharing their programs, initiatives, and activities with Nova Scotians through the provision of the following services and products:

- media relations
- issues management
- news releases, speeches and publications
- promotion of communications strategies and programs.

Working with staff, Communications helps in the development of advertising campaigns, brochures and other publications and makes the department's website more user friendly.

Human Resources

Human Resources provides services in the following areas: human resource planning, recruitment and selection, human resource development, counseling, attendance management, labour relations, performance management, occupational health and safety, employee benefit information, compensation and salary administration and personnel and payroll records.

Program and Operations Support

Program and Operations Support Division is accountable for the effective delivery of a wide variety of services, including some operational and administrative services to Head Office, program divisions, and regional/district offices. Services provided by this division include:

- business and client services
- licensing
- process improvement
- revenue recovery
- property services.

Finance and Administration

Finance and Administration manages the department's budget process and provides financial support to all divisions and regions. A major challenge of the division is to oversee the management of budgets in excess of $756.4 million. The key sections of the division are:

- Budgets and Results provides budget management, control services and supports strategic planning

- Accounting and Control section provides support in the areas of financial reporting and controls
- Administrative Services is responsible for inventory management/control and procurement.

Policy and Information Management

In the Policy and Information Management Division complementary support services are grouped together, in an effort to build expertise and capacity. This division encompasses all of the information management disciplines - information technology services, access, privacy, and records; corporate policy, research and evaluation; and federal provincial and territorial social initiatives. Staff in this division provide support to their colleagues through the provision of the following services:

Federal/Provincial/Social Initiatives:

- facilitate federal/provincial/territorial projects
- negotiate federal/provincial agreements

Policy, Planning and Research:

- policy analysis, formulation and coordination
- departmental strategic, business and operational planning
- statistical research
- program evaluation

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP):

- FOIPOP administration and advisement
- FOIPOP application process
- records and file management

Information Technology:

- infrastructure maintenance and support
- business applications support
- business technology solutions
- special projects

5.0 Priorities 2006-2007

The Government of Nova Scotia has adopted six key priorities as the foundation for business planning for the 2006-2007 fiscal year:

- Health Promotion and Protection
- Youth, Families and Communities
- Community Safety
- Economic Development and Infrastructure
- Environment

On a day-to-day basis the department delivers a wide range of social programs and services to Nova Scotians in need. These programs and services contribute to better futures for our youth, our families and their children, persons with disabilities, and communities throughout Nova Scotia.

A number of new initiatives are planned by the department for 2006-2007. These initiatives are focused on strengthening the social service system, enabling the Government to improve outcomes for Nova Scotia's youth, families and communities.

5.1 Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

Priority: Increasing Income Support for Households in Need

Most Nova Scotians enjoy a healthy and prosperous life, with opportunities for themselves and their families to participate in their communities, contribute to and be included in the economic and social life of the province. However when circumstances change, when families find themselves in crisis because of illness, disability, loss of employment, or changing family circumstances, some may need to rely, in whole or part, on income assistance.

Effective December 2006, the department will increase monthly basic personal and shelter allowances, building on adjustments made in 2004 and 2005. Monthly personal allowances will increase by $10, from $190 to $200. Shelter rates will increase by $15 a month for certain singles, and by $20 a month for families. These adjustments will help people with the cost of meeting their basic needs.

Priority: Increase in Dental Fees Paid on Behalf of Income Assistance Clients

The Employment Support and Income Assistance Program (ESIA) provides emergency dental coverage as an item of special need to eligible clients and their dependents. Applicants or recipients and their spouses and children may be eligible to receive emergency dental coverage as per the approved dental rates schedule in the ESIA policy.

In 2006-2007, the department will increase the dental rates schedule in the ESIA policy by 6%. This brings the rates more in line with the cost of services. Clients will benefit from a reduction in the amount they were required to pay and they will be able to have emergency dental work that they may have had to forgo if they could not pay the difference.

Priority: **Low Income Pharmacare Program**

Low income working families in receipt of the Nova Scotia Child Benefit will have access to prescription drug coverage for their children.

In 2006-2007, the department will implement a Low Income Pharmacare Program for children of working low income families. Approximately 33,000 children of low income working families who are in receipt of the Nova Scotia Child Benefit will have access to prescription drug coverage.

Priority: **Income Tax Refund for Income Assistance Clients**

Approximately 3,500 Income Assistance clients who receive an income tax refund, will have the refund treated as earned income and be permitted to keep 30% as a wage incentive. Under the current ESIA Regulations, 100% of income tax refunds are considered chargeable income in the month it is received and a client's entitlement is reduced by the total amount of the refund.

Priority: **Strengthening Income Assistance Internal Controls/Delivery**

The January 2006 Auditor General's Report identified areas for improvement in the delivery of the Income Assistance component of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program.

In 2006-2007, the department will review the Report's recommendations and develop and implement appropriate action to address system and process improvements that may include new procedures and/or controls and staff training initiatives.

Priority: **Strengthening ESIA Case Management**

In 2006-2007, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program will be pursuing several initiatives to facilitate a smooth transition to the new Integrated Case Management computer system. These initiatives include the development of a user- friendly Income Assistance policy and procedure manual, standards and website navigational tools for staff and clients. The initiatives are designed to complement and maximize the benefits of the new computer system.

5.2 Housing

Priority: Implementation of the Affordable Housing Program Agreement - Phase II

As of March 31, 2006, the province has fully committed all of the $37.26 million funding available under Phase I of the Affordable Housing Agreement. This funding was used to create or rehabilitate approximately 900 housing units. This investment was shared by the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia and its housing partners.

Funding under Phase II of the Agreement begins in 2006-2007. The Government of Canada has offered a series of changes including additional flexibility in delivery, a rent supplement option for use of some federal funding, and an extension of the expenditure deadlines to 2010. An amendment to the Affordable Housing Agreement is pending.

In 2006-2007, implementation of Phase II, valued at approximately $18.9 million, will begin. This will bring the total investment under the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Program Agreement to $56.18 million.

5.3 Family and Community Supports

Priority: Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)

The federal government commitment to a five-year child care plan ceased with the change in federal government in January 2006. As a result Nova Scotia has had to revisit its plan on the basis that funding, specifically for this plan, will cease effective March 2007. Currently, the approach envisioned by the province, will focus on strengthening the child care sector in its provision of services that support healthy child development.

Proposed Early Learning and Child Care investments for 2006-2007 include funding for the expansion of licensed child care and family-home child care spaces; expansion of the Child Care Subsidy Program; operational funding to child care centres; child care sector business process improvements; increased service to support children and families; and increased program efficiency, effectiveness and accountability.

Priority: Implement the Recommendations of the Joint Child Welfare Steering Committee

In 2005-2006, the Joint Child Welfare Steering Committee, comprised of Presidents from four Children's Aid Societies and four senior department officials, completed its review of Nova Scotia's child welfare services. The Committee tabled a report with recommendations in the following key service delivery areas:

- child welfare placement system
- on-call/after hours services for child protection
- jurisdictional issues influencing foster and adoption services
- opportunities for shared services and facilities between the province and the community based child welfare agencies.

In 2006-2007, the department will be implementing the recommendations of the Committee. Specific recommendations include:

- Removing the barriers that currently prevent foster and adoption families from being available to children outside the jurisdiction of their particular agencies or government offices. This will help ensure the best match between children and families, leading to fewer moves and more permanent placements.

- Placement services will be reorganized to ensure full range of residential services is available to meet each child's unique needs. These services include foster homes, group homes and programs for children with disabilities who are in the province's care.

- Support for families at home, including prevention, parenting programs and services to youth, will continue to be strengthened in partnership with community organizations.

Priority: **Post Adoption Services for Adoptive Families**

Over the course of the past several years, the department has made considerable progress in strengthening adoption services. Through consultations with the child welfare sector and stakeholders, the need to develop post adoption services to provide support to families who adopt children with special needs was identified as critical. Post adoption support can help avoid a breakdown in adoptions and children being returned to provincial care.

In 2006-2007, the department will examine models of service delivery and make recommendations regarding the appropriate mix of post adoption services to meet the needs of adoptive families in Nova Scotia. These services may include a range of services such as information and referral to community based resources, support groups, training on special needs and adoptive parenting, support and access to special education, mental health services, and therapeutic counseling.

Priority: **Increasing Supports for Foster Families**

Foster parents provide alternate family homes for children and youth in temporary or permanent care pursuant to the Children and Family Services Act. As the primary placement resource for Child Protection Services, Adoption and the Children in Care Programs, Foster parents help

ensure that children and youth live in safe, nurturing environments that promote their mental, physical, emotional and social development.

The current rate for Foster parents has remained unchanged since November 1, 1999. This makes it difficult to recruit new foster parents, and to retain parents. In 2006-2007, the department will increase base rates for Foster parents by 5%.

Priority: Support for Youth in Care to Continue to Attend University

In 2006-2007, the department will extend the school incentive program for children in permanent care and custody of the Minister to youth 21 to 24 years of age.

Youth, who were formerly in permanent care and custody of the Minister and who are enrolled in post secondary education, will be eligible to receive funds to cover the costs of tuition, books, and related costs to a maximum of $7,000 a year. With the benefit of a post-secondary education, risks such as unemployment or homelessness are reduced.

Priority: Strengthening Services for Youth At Risk

In partnership with the Departments of Justice and Health, and the Children and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC), a Youth at Risk Project has been initiated.

Those youth most at risk are those who are homeless, who did not graduate from high school, and who have physical, cognitive or emotional impairments. Based on the Canadian Incidence Study, it is estimated that there are approximately 137 new substantiated cases of youth maltreatment annually (confirmed or suspected) in Nova Scotia.

The goal is to better serve this vulnerable population. The focus of the project will be youth who are 16 to 19 years of age and who lack the necessary support or appropriate supports for successful participation in their community.

Priority: Family Violence Initiatives

In 2006-2007, the Deputy Ministers Leadership Committee on Family Violence will continue as a vehicle to enable enhanced collaboration between stakeholder departments and to help strengthen government's response to family violence and spousal/intimate partner violence.

Community Services, working with the Departments of Health and Justice, will develop a new framework that will include the identification of priorities for action in areas of prevention, intervention and protection, and discussions with our community partners. In addition, Community Services will establish an internal departmental committee, building on the approach already established by the Department of Justice, to promote awareness and understanding of family violence and spousal/intimate partner violence.

5.4 Services for Persons with Disabilities

Priority: Community Supports Renewal Project

In 2006-2007, program improvements will continue in renewing the residential support system for children and adults with disabilities, and will include the following:

- The Alternate Family Support program will be implemented in April 2006. It will support families who welcome a person with a disability into their homes and families.

- Phase I implementation of a new assessment tool(s) will occur in 2006-2007. The department has been working in conjunction with the Department of Health to develop and pilot a number of assessment tools.

- The Adult Service Centre review will continue in 2006. Over the next few months, information gathered from the review of 28 centres will be analyzed and recommendations will be developed for enhancements to the service delivery model. A discussion paper is planned to be released to the public during the 2006-2007 period outlining the review process and recommendations for change.

- In 2006-2007, a funding methodology will be developed. This funding methodology will provide a template to assist service providers to clearly understand and define their funding requirements within specific parameters outlined by the department. The funding strategy process will allow for consistency, fairness and transparency.

- A residential redesign project will include an assessment of the current continuum of residential supports available in regions throughout the province. This assessment will identify current needs of persons with disabilities within each region, current residential options, and any service gaps and necessary adjustments that may be required.

- The department is working jointly with the Department of Health to implement the new Protection of Persons in Care Act. Roll-out of this new Act will occur across the province. A training program is being developed for staff and stakeholders.

- The In-Home Support Reassessment project with the Department of Health is continuing in 2006-2007. Reassessment of clients is now underway, and will allow for identification of appropriate supports and services for these families.

5.5 Corporate Initiatives

Priority: Improvements to the Department's Licensing Function

In 2006-2007, a licensing system will be developed to enhance the department's ability to efficiently and effectively execute licensing functions as they apply to the *Day Care Act* and regulations, *Children and Family Services Act* and regulations, and *Homes for Special Care Act.* The goal is to achieve consistent and uniform delivery of licensing services.

Priority: Client Service Improvement

The department remains committed to the provision of quality client services. The following client service improvement initiatives will be undertaken in 2006-2007:

- Building on the work completed in 2005-2006, the department will continue to focus on the measurement of client satisfaction, utilizing survey results to assist in setting service and program standards.

- Liaising with the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman, the department will examine its complaint resolution processes to ensure timely and appropriate response to individual client concerns, and to ensure information is available to support the identification of process improvement activities.

- The availability of user friendly information will remain a priority with the department examining ways to expand its toll free telephone service and enhance other services to improve client access to Community Services program and service information.

Priority: French Language Services

The department is supporting government' s commitment to enhancing French language services within Nova Scotia. A departmental work plan based on discussions with senior management, exploring initiatives on a program by program basis, province-wide client surveys with staff, and consultations held within the Acadian communities are guiding the implementation of the following 2006-2007 projects aimed at enhancing French language services:

- Expanding on the availability of French web-based information on the department's services and programs.

- Five employees of the department will be participating in training at the Université Sainte-Anne.

- French language child care programs and services will continue to be supported,

including a feasibility study for "hub model" service.

- The department will also be exploring options to provide French speaking therapy to individuals involved with family violence prevention programs.

Priority: Continue Implementation of the Integrated Case Management Solution

In 2006-2007 work will continue on the Integrated Case Management project with the implementation of a modern case management and financial management tool to support the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program and basic case management needs of the Services for Persons with Disabilities (SPD) program. This release will require detailed change management and training strategies, as it has broad implications for staff and the department.

6.0 Human Resource Strategy

The 2006-2007 strategic human resource actions planned by the department are:

- ***Succession Planning***
  Community Services has approximately 1,250 employees working from 40 sites across the province. The department, like many other departments of government, continues to have an aging workforce. A review of the demographics, indicates that a substantial number of departmental employees can retire in the next five years.

  In 2006-2007, Phase II of the Succession Planning pilot project will begin, building on the completion of Phase I scheduled for the summer 2006.

- ***Employee Survey***
  The 2004 and 2005 Employee Surveys provided the department with valuable information regarding the perceptions and concerns of its employees. In response to the survey, the department established a departmental steering committee to explore the results, identify concrete steps, and implement changes that will address the key areas concern.

  In 2006-2007, upon completion of focus groups with staff, the department will develop and communicate an action plan to staff.

- ***Occupational Health & Safety***
  The department values the health and safety of employees. Our objective is to ensure all workplaces are in compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and regulations and that every reasonable precaution is taken to provide a healthy and safe workplace. In 2004-05, there were approximately 50 reported

workplace accidents and 90 violent workplace incidents.

In 2006-2007, more emphasis will be placed on "near miss" reporting providing an opportunity for the department to prevent an incident from occurring.

In addition, lunch and learn programs, and information on health promotion and infection control will be developed/distributed as part of the implementation of the provincial Healthy Workplace Program.

- ***Affirmative Action***

The department is committed to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity for all persons accessing employment opportunities. As of August 2005, 76% of staff were female and 7% represented visible minorities

In 2006-2007, the department will build on the Affirmative Action Plan with the development of outcome measures.

7.0 Budget Context

Department of Community Services
Estimated Budget Expenditures by Core Business Area

Core Business	Forecast 2005-2006 ($ Millions)*	Budget 2006-2007 ($ Millions)*
Income Assistance and Employment Support	348.1	357.8
Family and Children's Services	141.6	164.9
Housing Services	103.7	117.1
Services for Persons with Disabilities	172.4	182.6
Administration and Support	30.3	34.8
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	796.1	857.2
Recoveries	(84.6)	(109.1)
Total Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	711.5	748.1
Salaries and Benefits	61.4	66.3
Funded Staff (FTE's)	1092.3	1143.5
*Per 2006/07 Estimates Book		

8.0 Performance Measures

In 2004-2005, the department engaged in a strategic planning exercise. Six strategic goals were identified, to which all core business areas and corporate support services contribute. In an effort to more fully capture the many results which the department makes in fulfillment of its mission, progress in achieving these goals is being measured using the performance measures outlined below.

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Goal: To strengthen the capacity of individuals and families to participate in their communities, achieve their full potential, and assume responsibility for addressing their own needs.					
Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.	ESIA[12]	Average monthly caseload[13]	2004-05: 32,250 2003-04 (BY): 32,760	Maintain at or below the 2003-04 base year level.	Ongoing monitoring of client eligibility. Follow-up on the appropriate outcomes of the Employment Support Services evaluation.
	ESIA	% of cases with wage income[14]	2004-05: 9.7% 2003-04 (BY): 10.4%	Maintain at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	Continue to provide supports to assist clients with childcare, transportation and pharmacare in the movement towards self-reliance.
	ESIA	Income assistance as a % of total household income[15]	2004-05: 70.4% 2003-04 (BY): 69.6%	Decrease annually by 1%.	On-going sharing of current information across federal and provincial programs that will assist staff when informing clients of other sources of income available.

[12]Core Business Area: Employment Support and Income Assistance

[13]Replaces previous measure of the number of people receiving income assistance as of March 31st of each year.

[14]This measure was changed to describe the average monthly percentage of the caseload with wage income.

[15]This measure was changed to represent the percentage of annual income assistance payments of the total annual household income for all income recipients.

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.	ESIA	% of income assistance recipients involved in Employment Support Services who have secured full or part-time employment	2004-05:28% 2003-04 (BY): 25%	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	Support recipients through the Targeted Wage Subsidy Program by providing job development services and employment readiness programs. Partner with community based employment programs to provide services to income assistance recipients. Following the One Journey Work and Learn Model, support client participation in employment projects. Provide Special Needs supports to assist individuals to participate in the labour market.
	ESIA	% of income assistance recipients, who upon employability assessment, are supported to attend an educational program	2004-05: 48% 2003-04 (BY): 43%	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	Through the Adult School of Learning, ensure income assistance recipients have an opportunity to complete the adult high school diploma. Offer opportunities for recipients through the Educate to Work program. Support recipients to participate in the One Journey Work and Learn projects.

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.	ESIA	% of youth (16 - 24) receiving income assistance assisted to enhance their employability	2004-05: 34.1% 2003-04 (BY): 34.4%	% is maintained at or above the 2003-04 base year level.	Provide support to youth through Employment Readiness Programs, the Youth Development Initiative, Job Development Services and Life Skills Programs.
	H[16]	% of the public housing budget allocated to the maintenance and capital improvement of the province's public housing	2004-05: 23.4% 2003-04 (BY): 22.7%	Maintain at approximately 20% or more	Continue implementation of maintenance regime based on regular inspections using a combination of contracted labour and staff resources. Update multi-year capital works plans and schedule work to ensure completion of construction projects within fiscal year.
	H	Affordable Housing Agreement funds committed on creating or renovating housing units	2005-06: committed to date $37.26 million 2004-05:committed to date $19 million 2003-04: committed to date $1.25 million 2002-03: committed to date $750,000	Commit Phase II funding $18.9 million by March 2008	Begin to implement Phase II Affordable Housing Agreement. Work in partnership with community based organizations, municipalities and the private sector to increase or preserve housing units.

[16]Core Business Area: Housing

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.	H	% of co-operative housing organizations who achieve a ranking of Level I or a High Level II based on an annual assessment of their financial, democratic and physical condition	FY 2005-06 (BY): to be reported at the end of the fiscal year.		Implement the Cooperative Housing Organization Ranking Model as an evaluation tool to assess the health of the co-operative housing portfolio.
	FCS[17]	# of children in permanent care and custody where adoption was finalized	2004-05: 75 children 2003-04 (BY): 118 children	Increase the # of adoptions of children in permanent care and custody	The department is working on several initiatives which may increase the number of children adopted including improving public awareness/recruitment, improved service delivery and standards, mandatory training for applicants, and internal statistical reporting. Implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Child Welfare Steering Committee.
	FCS	Rate of children in permanent care and custody (per 1,000 children 20 years of age and under[18])	2004-05: 5.0 2003-04 (BY): 4.6	Maintain at the 2003-04 base year rate, or decrease	Using the Children in Care and Custody Standards, emphasize comprehensive planning for children. Use alternative services such as family group counseling, outreach services from residential facilities, mediation, respite, family preservation and reunification, and in-home services.

[17]Core Business Area: Family and Community Supports

[18]Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Population, Catalogue # 95FO300XCB2001006. This measure includes children up to and including 20 years of age as this program provides services to this group.

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.	FCS	% of children that come into care and custody of the total number of children receiving protection services	2004-05: 5.4% (22,626 children received protection services of which 1,229 were in care and custody) 2003-04: 5.8% 2002-03 (BY): 6.3%	2002-03 base year rate is maintained or decreased	Work with other government departments and community partners on the development of a collaborative work plan for action. Increase the ability of parents to more confidently meet their children's needs through parent education programs.
	FCS	# of spaces in full-time licensed child care centres	# of spaces in child care centres: April 2005: 9,298 April 2004 (BY): 9,243	Target for 2005-06 is to increase the # of spaces by 250 or more[19]	Early Learning and Child Care Plan proposes investments in funding for the expansion of licensed child care and family-home child care spaces.
	FCS	# of spaces in family-home daycare	2006-07 baseline to be developed		Develop Family Home Child Care program and related policies and regulations.
	FCS	# of licensed child care centres in receipt of funding for children with special needs	2004-05 (BY): 130	Maintain at or above 2004-05 base year level	Provide opportunities for early childhood educators to attend Building Blocks for Inclusion workshops and participate in the Partnership for Inclusion project. Work with post-secondary early childhood education training institutions to support the philosophy of inclusion within their core curriculum content.

[19]Target has been adjusted due to change in federal funding.

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Self-reliant people, strong families, and inclusive communities.	FCS	# of children with special needs supported in licensed child care programs	2004-05 (BY): 553	Increase the # of children with special needs attending licensed child care programs.	Work with sector stakeholders in marketing/messaging the short and long term benefits to all children/ communities in providing inclusive child care programs.
	FCS	Monthly utilization rate of portable subsidized child care spaces	2005-06 (BY): 90.84%[20]	95% utilization rate	Wait list management protocol and processes to be developed along with enhancements to the application process.
	SPD[21]	% of adult clients with disabilities receiving support services who remain at home with their families	2005-06 (BY): % of clients, 19 years of age and older, who received residential supports		The Direct Family Support Program was introduced in January 2005 and has continued to be phased in during 2005-06.
	SPD	# of alternative family support homes	2006-07 baseline to be developed		This is a new program supports families who welcome a person with a disability into their homes. Implementation is scheduled for April 2006.
	SPD	# of independent living support clients	2006-07 baseline to be developed		The Independent Living Program was implemented in January 2006. Phase I of this program commenced in Eastern Region.

[20]Based on eleven months of data.

[21]Core Business Area: Services for Persons with Disabilities

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Goal: To build and maintain a well managed, capable, responsive and sustainable social service system.					
Strong, responsive, and sustainable social support system.	All CBAs	% of staff who indicate that they work for an effective organization; in other words, the department regularly achieves the goals set out in the Business Plan.	Employees Survey Report: 2005: 47% 2004 (BY): 44%	Increase the % of employees who indicate that they work for an effective organization.	Investigate the use and possible implementation of operational planning. An initiatives tracking data base will be implemented; improving the department's accountability in achieving the priorities set out in the Business Plan. Improve communications to staff on the priorities set out in Business Plan and accomplishments reported on in Accountability Report.
Goal: To create an integrated, client focused, quality service delivery system.					
Integrated, quality service delivery.	All CBAs	Client Satisfaction	2006-07 baseline to be developed.		In 2006-07, the department will begin measuring client satisfaction.

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Goal: To strengthen service provider relationships and leverage opportunities for collaboration.					
Strong provider relationships and collaboration.	FCS	% of trained early childhood educators in licenced full-day child care centres	April 2005: 87% (982 FTEs[22]) April 2004 (BY): 85% (966 FTEs)	Target is to maintain at 85% or higher	Provide support for training opportunities in the early childhood education field including support for the implementation of an online diploma Continue work on a recruitment and retention strategy for early childhood educators.
	FCS	# of foster parent in-service training programs delivered and the # of foster parent participants	2004-05(BY): 153 in-service training programs; 1,383 foster parent participants	Maintain at or above the 2004-05 level	Continue to provide foster parent reimbursement through the Federation of Foster Families in Nova Scotia (FFFNS). Explore alternative methods of documenting foster parent attendance and in-service training with the FFFNS.

[22]Full Time Equivalents

Outcome	CBA	Measure	Data Base Year (BY)	Target	Strategies to Achieve Target
Goal: To develop and demonstrate leadership in the continuous pursuit of excellence.					
Leadership and the continuous pursuit of excellence.	All CBAs	% of MCP (management) employees who participate in annual performance reviews	2004-05 (BY): 86% of MCPs participated in an annual performance review	100% particpation	Communicate target to managers, track and communicate actual results by end of first quarter.
	All CBAs	% of employees who indicate that senior management will try to resolve the issues raised by employees in the annual employee survey	Employees Survey Report: 2005: 36% 2004 (BY): 37%	Increase the % of employees	Conduct focus groups with staff to get a better understanding of employee perceptions. Identify concrete steps and implement changes to address the concerns raised by staff.
Goal: To foster a competent and committed workforce through appreciation and support for individuals and teamwork.					
Skilled, flexible workforce.	All CBAs	% of employees who indicate that they have access to training opportunities	Employees Survey Report: 2005: 72% 2004 (BY): 67%	Increase the % of employees	Establish Regional/Provincial Training Committees
	All CBAs	% of employees who indicate that they get the training and related support they need to support their continuous learning	Employees Survey Report: 2005: 43% 2004 (BY): 58%	Increase the % of employees	Implement a career planning process/tools. Ensure all staff have completed a career plan. Monitor training needs/activities.